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# Bullying on the Internet: The perspective of European children (9-16 years)

Selected findings from *EU Kids Online*, July 27<sup>th</sup> 2011

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# What I will tell you

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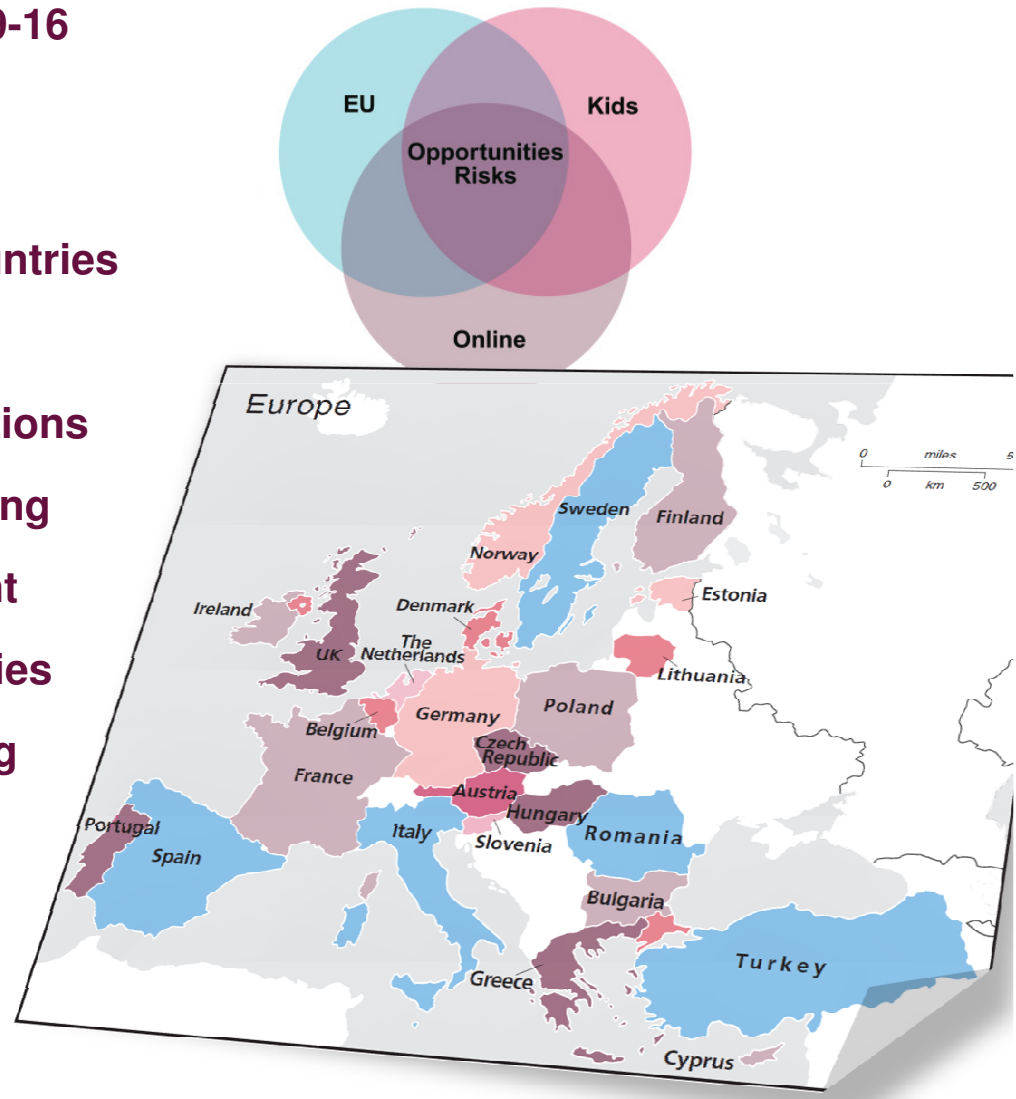


- 1. 93% of 9-16 year-old Internet users in Europe have neither bullied nor been bullied online.**
- 2. Offline bullying is more prevalent than online bullying**
- 3. Of all online risks we study, bullying is less likely to be experienced, but has the highest intensity of harm**
- 4. Parents are not likely to know their child is being bullied**
- 5. Children who are bullied online are also likely to bully others**
- 6. Cyber bullies (Internet and mobile) are different from offline bullies, being more risk takers, spending more time online, have high ICT ability self concept, and are more likely to be girls**
- 7. Level of digital skill is vital for children to cope and to avoid harm**

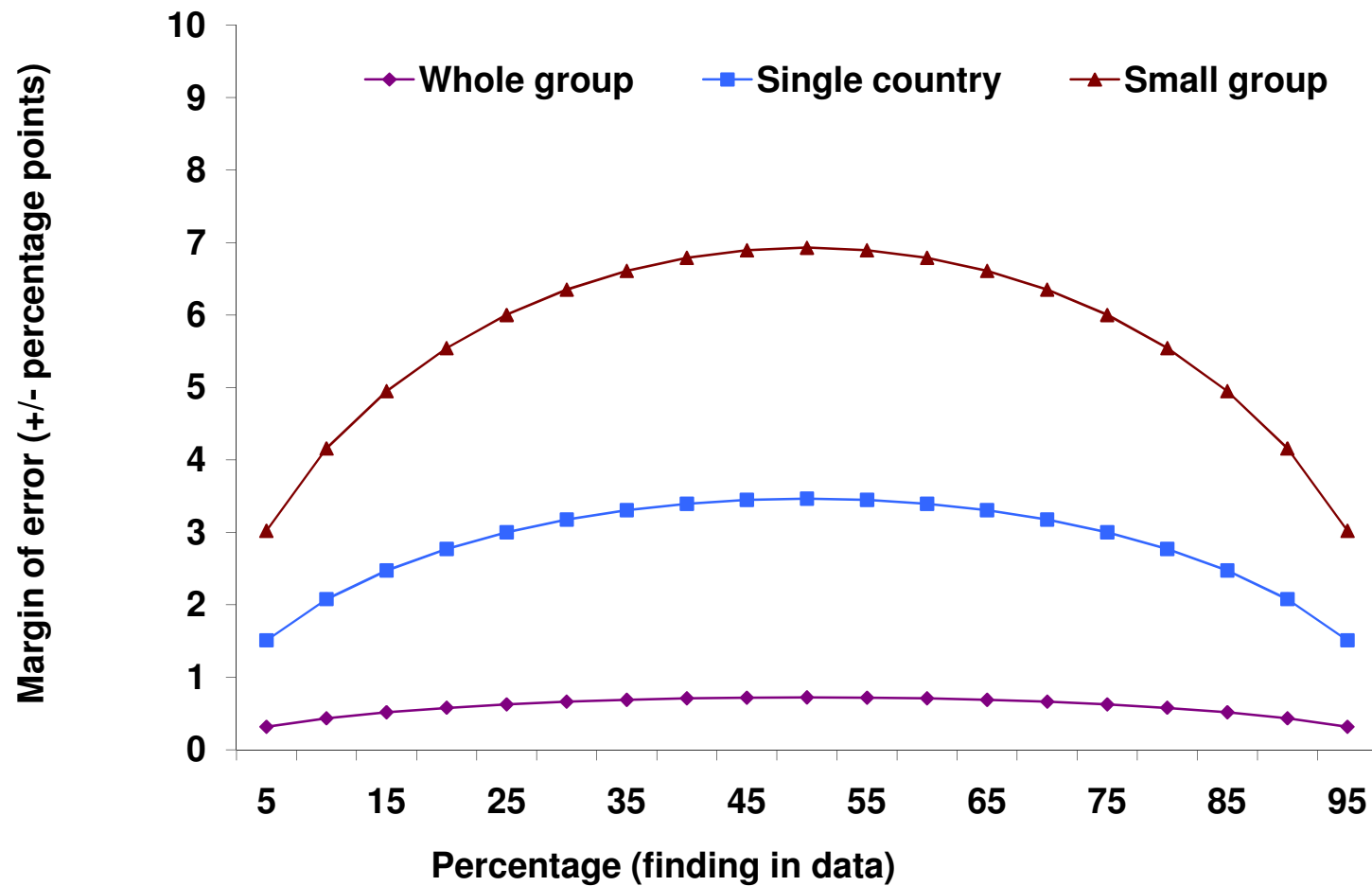
# Surveying bullying in 'Europe'



- Random stratified sample: ~ 1000 9-16 year old internet users per country
- Fieldwork in summer/fall 2010
- Total: 25.142 Internet-users, 25 countries
- Interviews at home, face to face
- Self-completion for sensitive questions
- Indicators of vulnerability and coping
- Data from child paired with a parent
- Directly comparable across countries
- Validation via cognitive/pilot testing
- National stakeholders consulted
- International advisory panel



# Estimated margin of error for analysis



# How we define bullying



*“Sometimes children or teenagers say or do hurtful or nasty things to someone and this can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time. It can include teasing someone in a way the person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; leaving someone out of things. Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months?/ Have you been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the Internet?”*

- In a private, self-completion part of the questionnaire, children were also asked whether they had ever bullied (i.e., “acted in a way that felt nasty or hurtful [a few times, over a period of time, teasing, hitting, or excluding] to someone else”) and whether this has happened face-to-face, on the Internet or by mobile phone.

# What is so special with digital bullying?



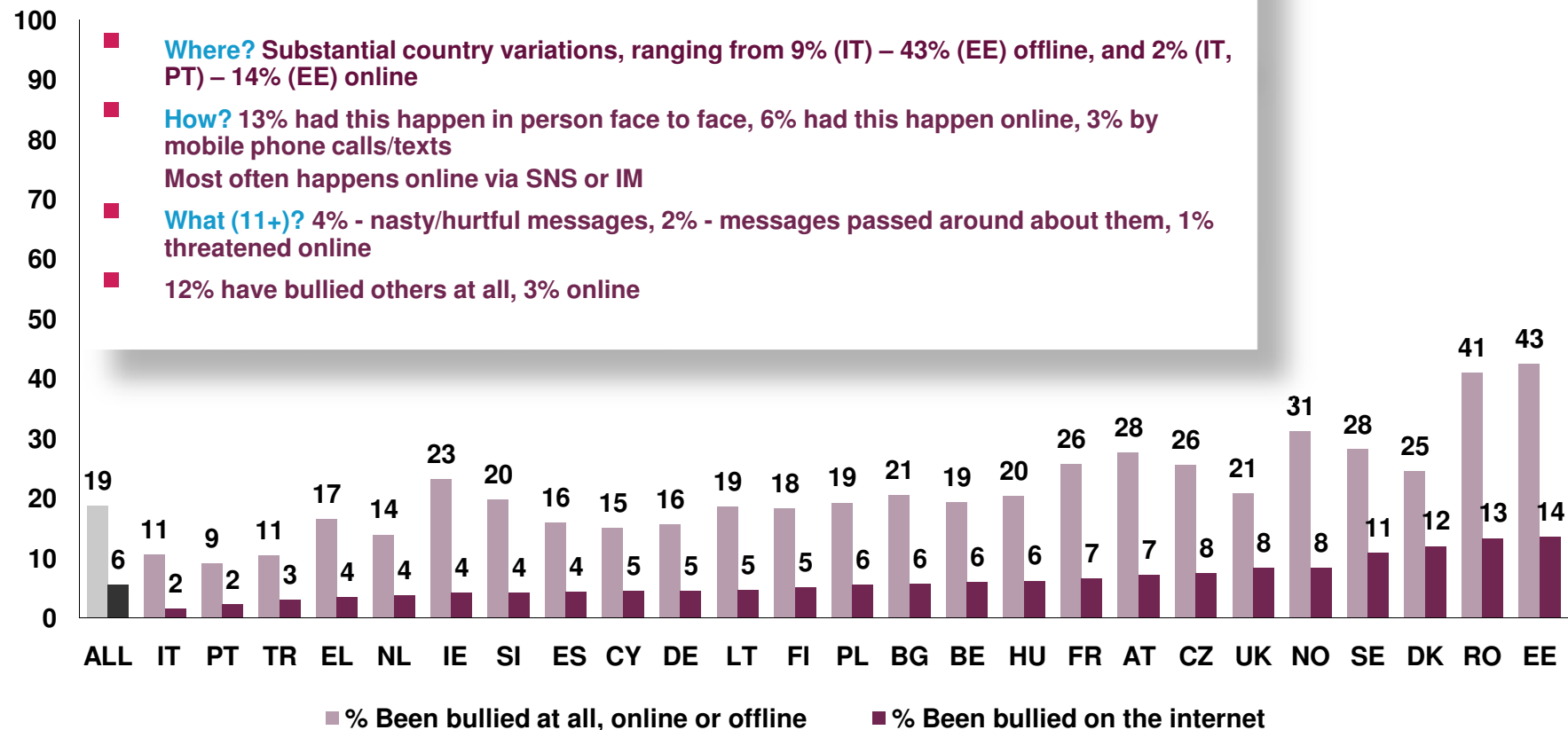
1. Potential use of audiovisual material
  2. Might be easier for the bully to remain anonymous
  3. Bullying can be documented
  4. New forms of social exclusion in the form of digital isolation
  5. Bullying becomes more publicly visible  
*but, paradoxically*
1. Bullying might be less visible to adults

Source: Staksrud, E. (2008). Fairytale parenting. Contextual factors influencing children's online self-representation. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital Storytelling, Mediatized Stories: Self-representations in New Media* (pp. 233-249). New York: Peter Lang.

# Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months, by country

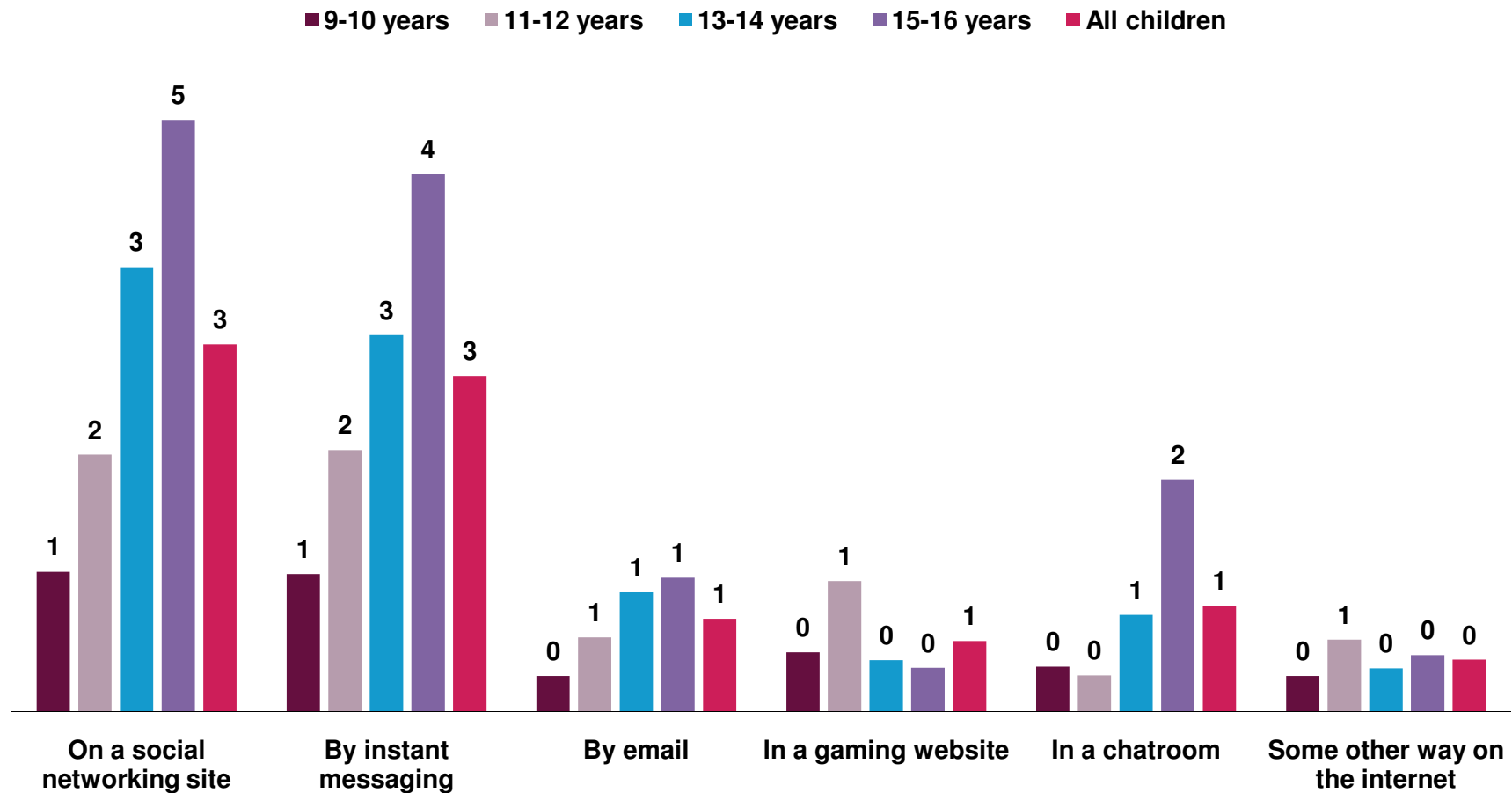


- 19% have had someone act in this way, online or offline
- Who?** Few differences by age, gender or social class  
Teenage girls 13-16 most experience this online – 9%
- Where?** Substantial country variations, ranging from 9% (IT) – 43% (EE) offline, and 2% (IT, PT) – 14% (EE) online
- How?** 13% had this happen in person face to face, 6% had this happen online, 3% by mobile phone calls/texts  
Most often happens online via SNS or IM
- What (11+)?** 4% - nasty/hurtful messages, 2% - messages passed around about them, 1% threatened online
- 12% have bullied others at all, 3% online



Base: All children who use the Internet

# Online services in which children have been bullied online in the past 12 months, by age

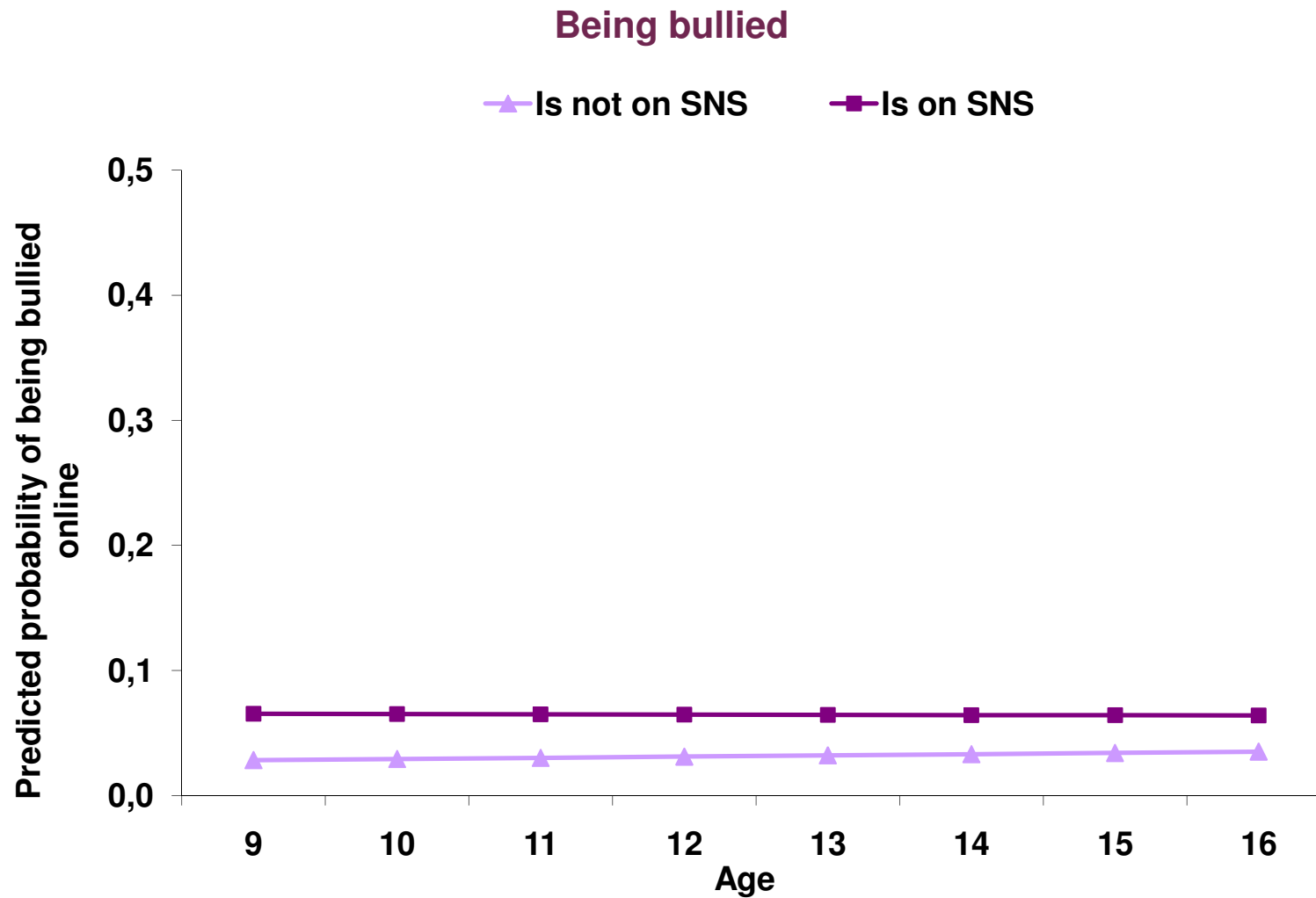


Base: All children who use the Internet



# Risk of being bullied on SNS, by age

(controlling for gender, internet use, parental rules, SNS and country)

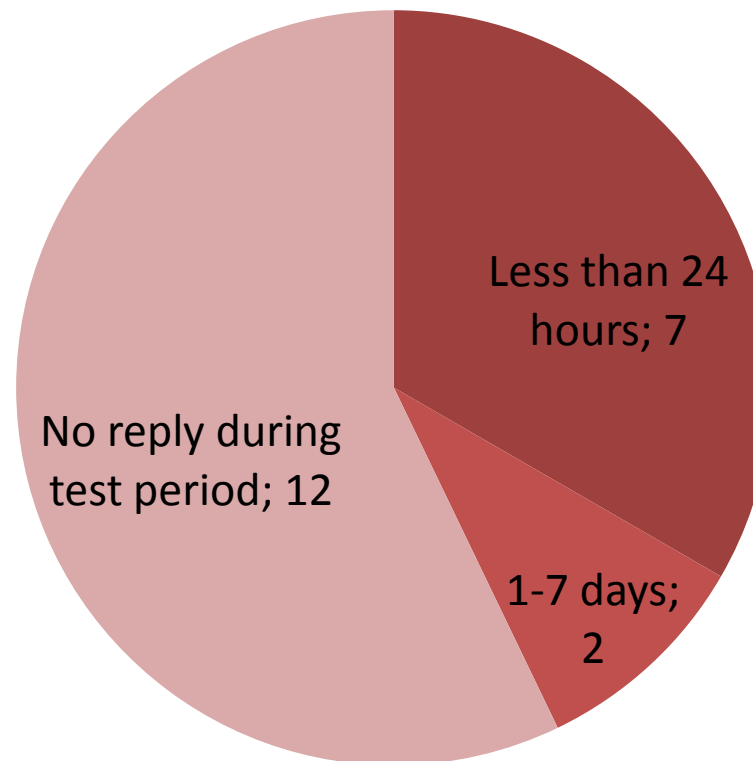


Source: Staksrud, Livingstone & Olafsson (forthcoming, 2011)

***“I am writing to you because someone is sending me scary messages. What should I do about this? Please help me.”***

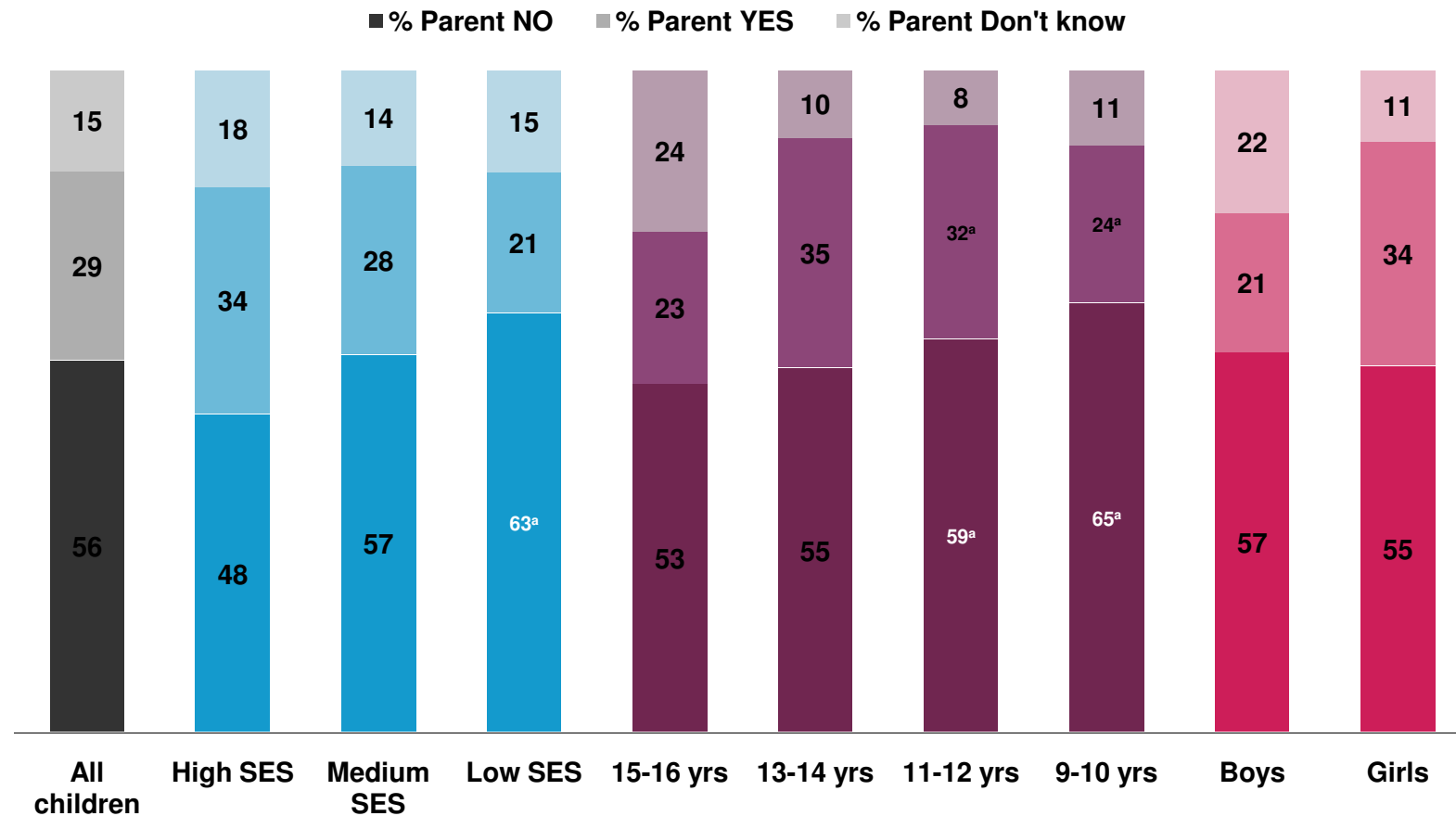


**Response time to minor user asking the major social networking services of Europe for help**

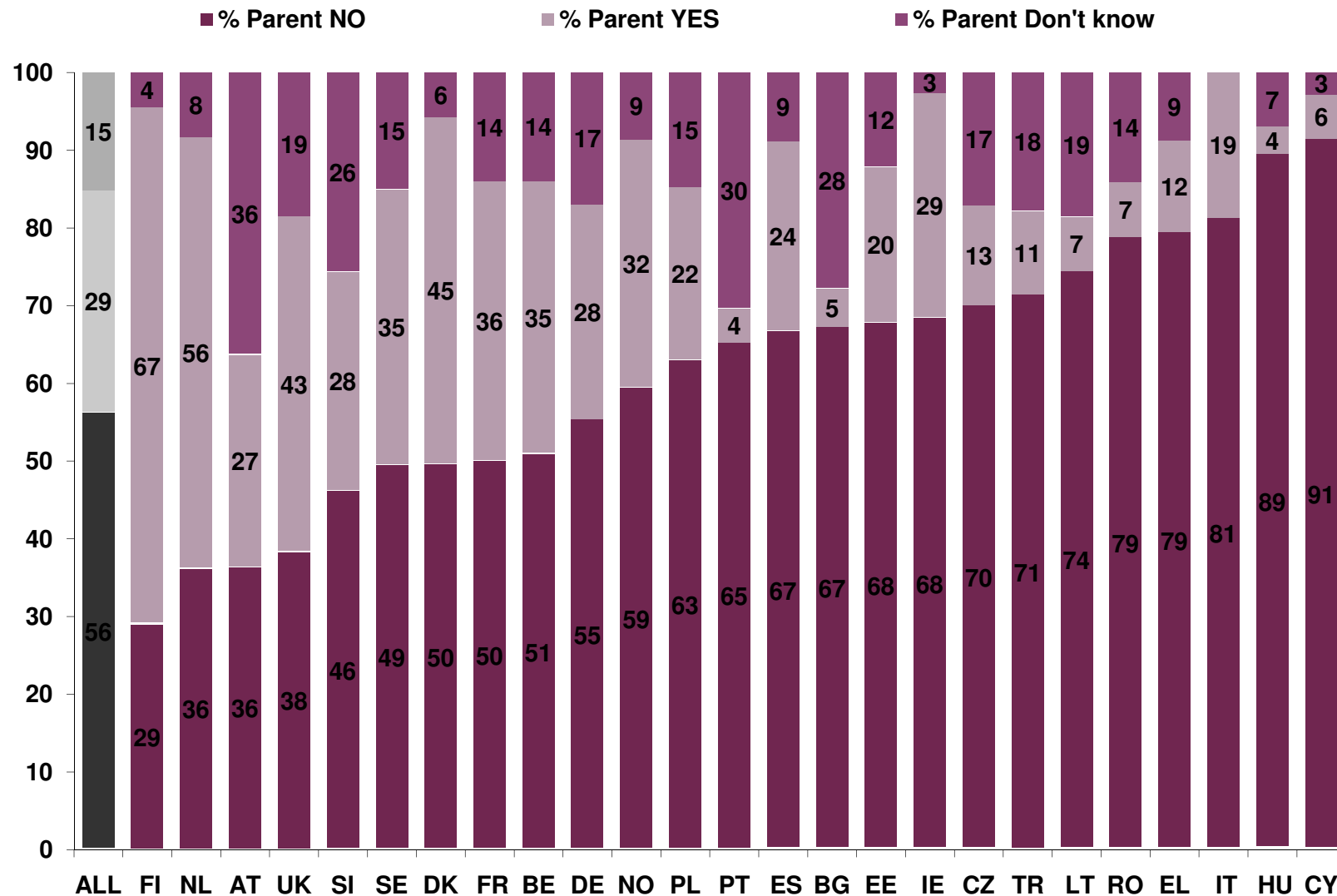


Source: Staksrud, E., & Lobe, B. (2010). Evaluation of the Implementation of the Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU Part I: General Report. Luxembourg: European Commission under the Safer Internet Programme.

# Parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online (only children who have been bullied online)



# Parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online (only children who have been bullied online), by country



Selected findings from Eukids II on online bullying

# **COPING & HARM**

# Coping strategies

Just those who encountered the risk and were bothered by it



## Who did they tell?

77% talked to somebody

52% talked to a friend

42% talked to a parent

14% talked to a sibling

9% talked to another adult they trust

7% talked to a teacher

2% talked to someone whose job it is to help children



## What did they do?

24% hoped it would go away

36% tried to fix it

16% felt guilty



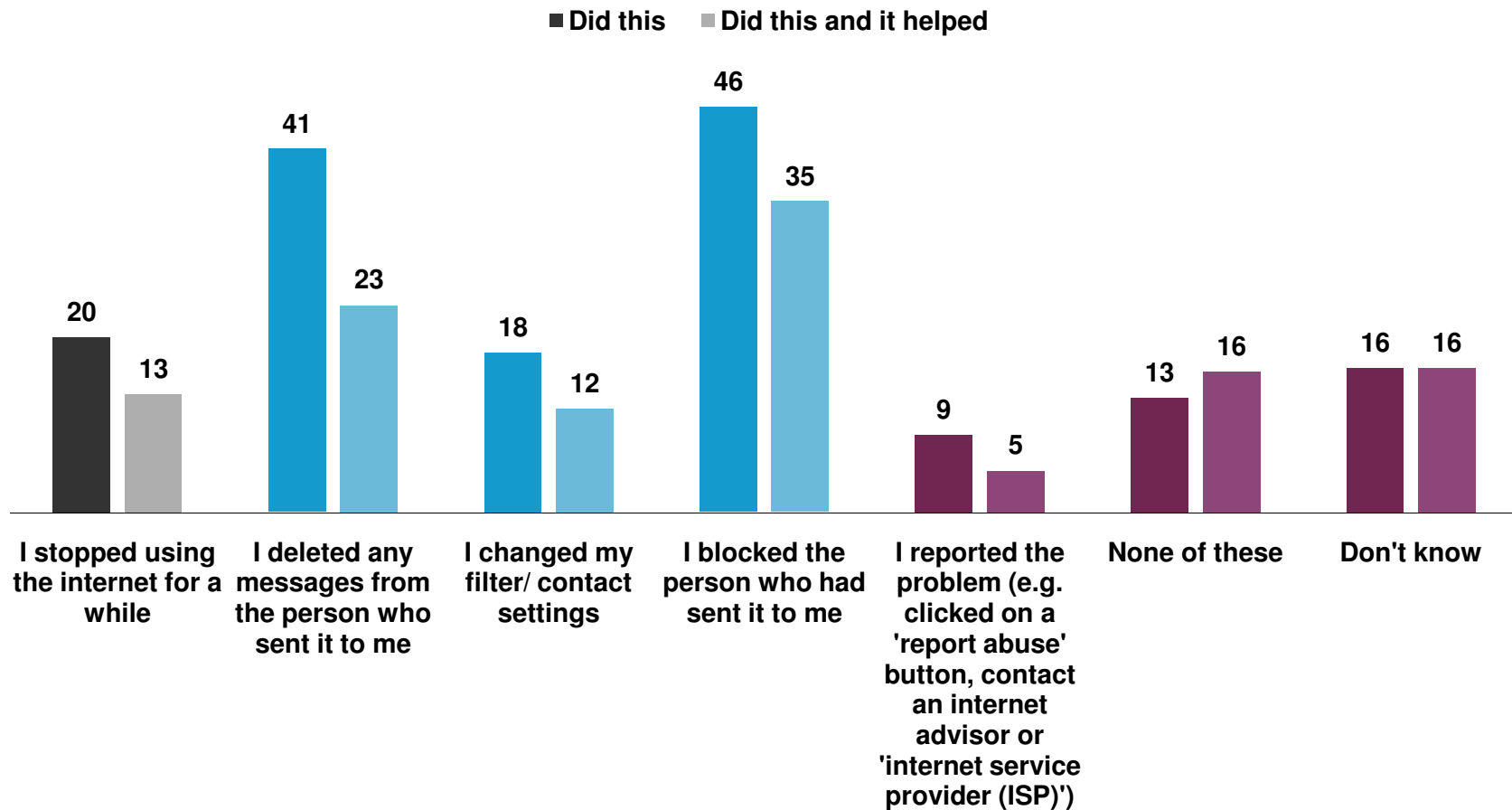
## Online help?

46% blocked person

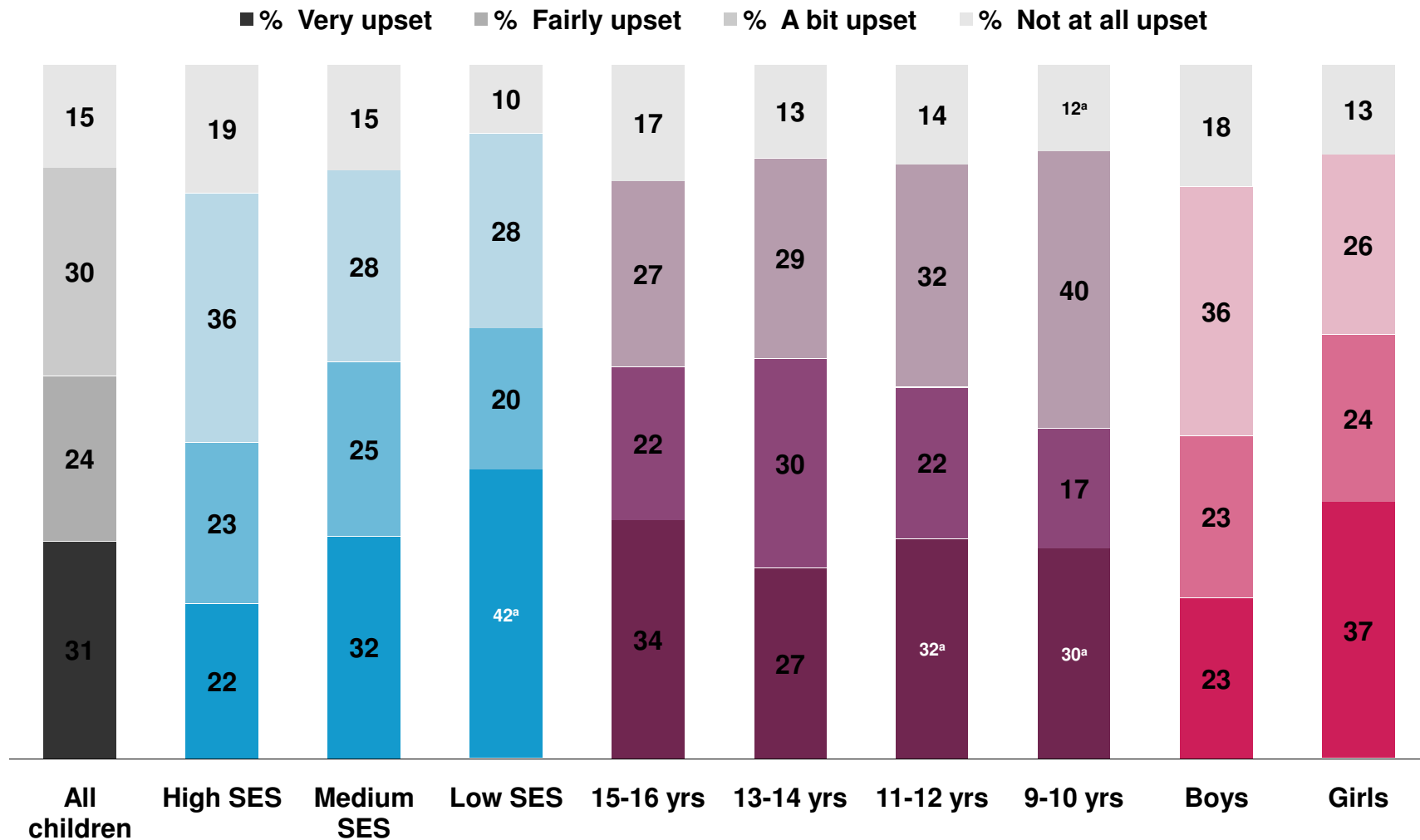
41% deleted messages

20% stopped using Internet for a while

# What the child did after being bullied online



# How upset the child felt after being bullied online (only children who have been bullied online in past 12 months)



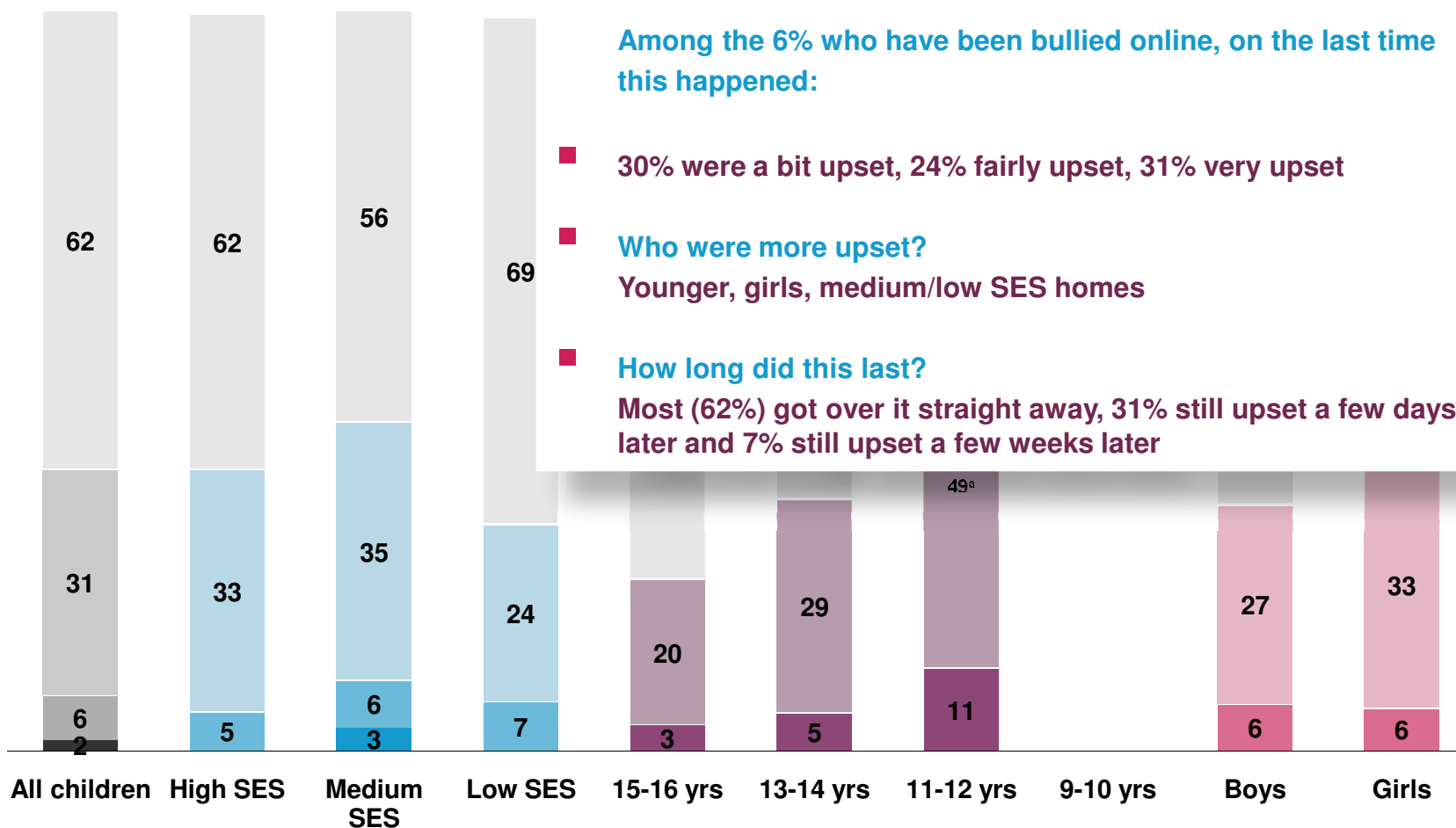


# For how long the child felt like that after being bullied online (only children aged 11+ who have been bullied online in past 12 months)



www.eukidsonline.net

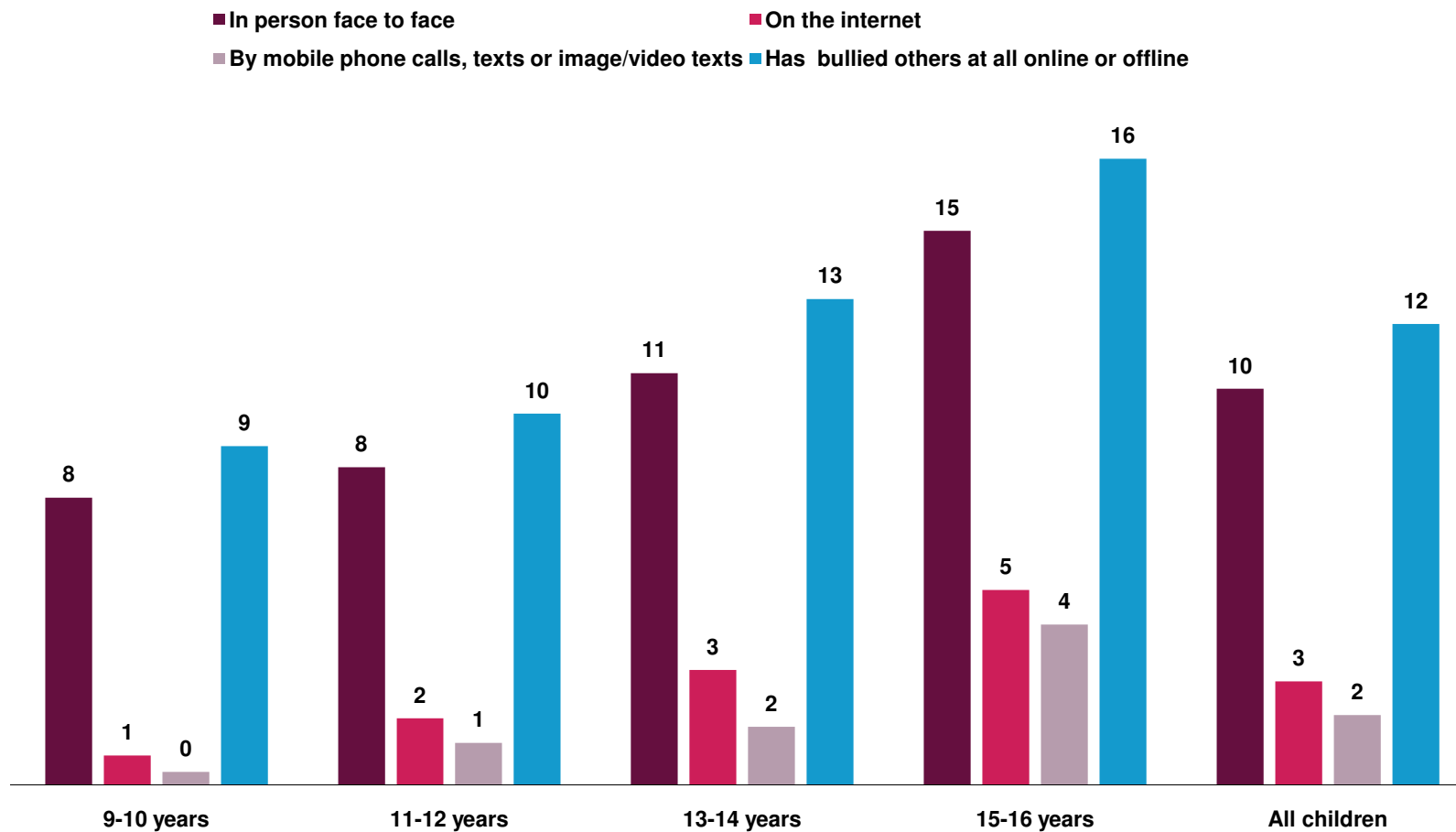
■ % For a couple of months or more ■ % For a few weeks ■ % For a few days ■ % I got over it straight away



Selected findings from Eukids II on online bullying

# **BULLIES**

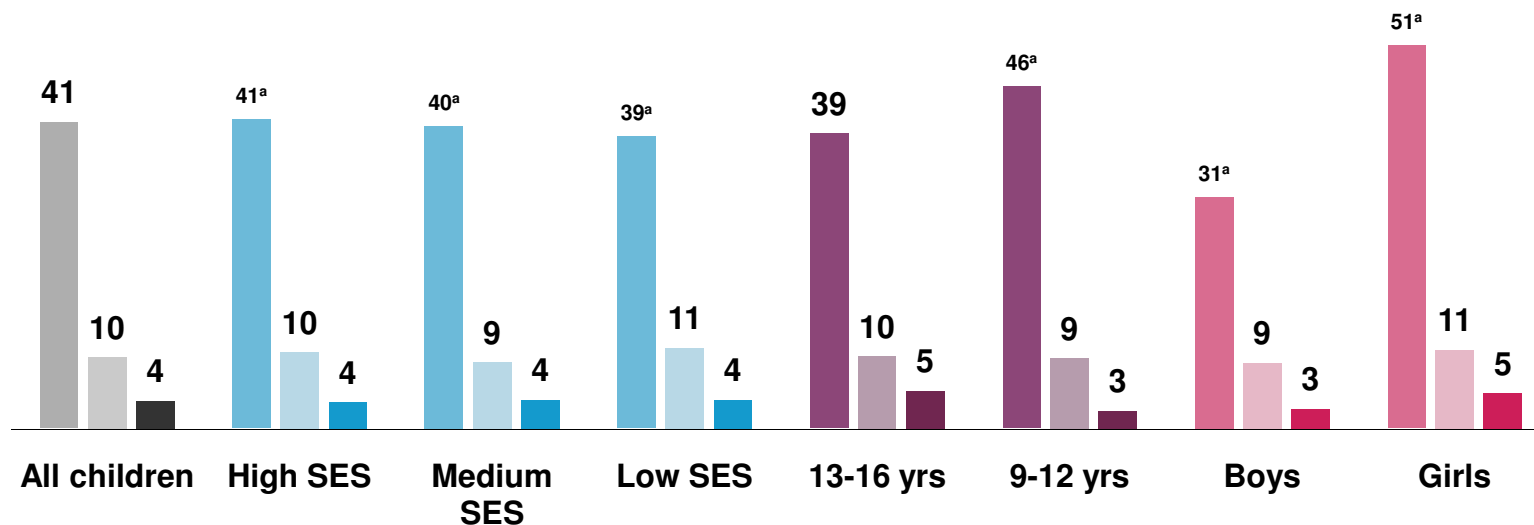
# How child has bullied others in past 12 months, by age



# Been bullied online of those who have bullied online, offline and not at all



■ % Has bullied online    ■ % Has bullied offline only    ■ % Has not bullied



# What makes a bully a cyberbully?



Those children who bully others via the Internet and/or a mobile device differ in several ways from those who bully others face-to-face only. In particular:

- cyberbullies (all else being equal) are at least four times as likely to engage in risky online activities, ( $OR=4.24, p<.001$ ),
- twice as likely to spend more time online and to find it easier to be themselves online, *time online* ( $OR=2.05, p<.001$ ), *online persona* ( $OR=2.05, p<.005$ )
- almost 1.9 times more likely to have a higher ICT ability self-concept ( $OR=1.88, p<.005$ ),
- 1.6 times more likely to be female ( $OR=1.57, p<.001$ )

Source: Görzig and Olafsson (submitted) *What makes a bully a cyberbully?*

# Summing up



- 93% of 9 to 16-year old Internet users in Europe have neither bullied nor been bullied online.
- Those who have bullied or been bullied online are more vulnerable psychologically or from their socio-demographic background.
- Bullying, and having been bullied online mostly go hand in hand. Around 60% of those who bully have been bullied by others. Bullying and being bullied by others mostly occur through similar modes.
- Those involved in online bullying (whether as bully or victim) are more likely to have a social networking profile and to meet new contacts online compared with those involved (as bully or victim) in offline bullying only.
- When bullied online, bullies are more likely than others to say they “feel guilty” or “try to get back at the other person”, but they are less likely than others to say they “try to fix the problem”.
- Online bullies differ from offline bullies in their Internet behaviour and attitudes but not in their offline behaviour.

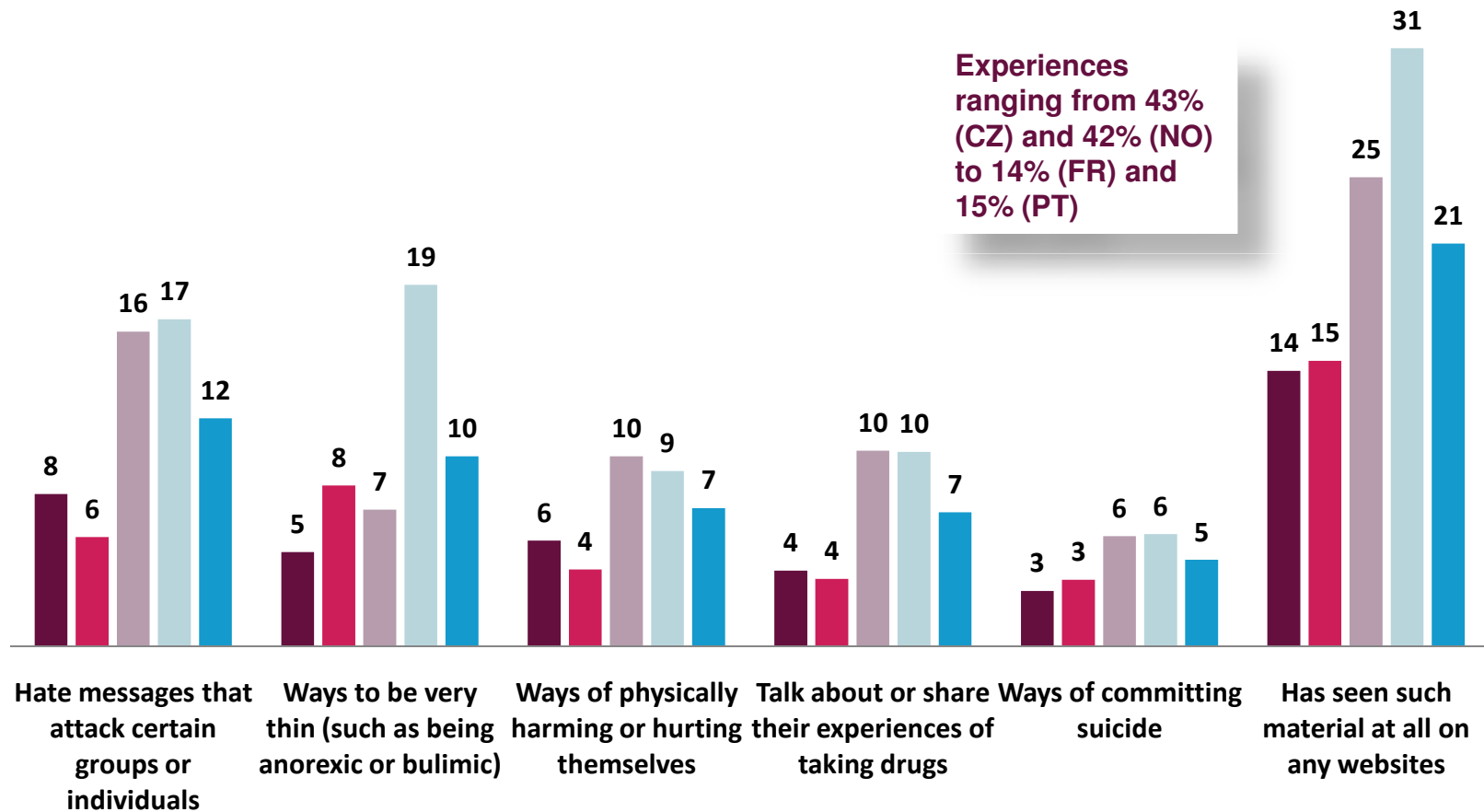
Selected findings from Eukids II

# **HARMFUL USER GENERATED SERVICES (HUGS)**

# Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content on websites in the past 12 months (age 11+)



■ Boys 11-13 years ■ Girls 11-13 years ■ Boys 14-16 years ■ Girls 14-16 years ■ All





Selected Eukids findings

# **IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

# Specific recommendations



- **Parents** - awareness-raising to alert them to the risks their children may encounter online whilst encouraging parent/child dialogue and understanding.
- **Schools** - Parents' preferred sources of information on internet safety are the child's school, so greater efforts should be undertaken by the education sector.
- **Schools** - digital skills training is vital for coping and avoid harm, thus needs continued emphasis and updating to ensure all children reach a minimum standard and to promote creative, positive uses.
- **Government (and others)** – target resources and guidance where particularly needed: on ever younger children/newer users and those who are vulnerable.
- **Industry** - efforts are needed to support awareness, usability and take up of internet safety tools to support blocking, reporting and filtering of other users if needed without jeopardizing children's access and participation, especially on Social Networking Sites

# Recommendations cont.



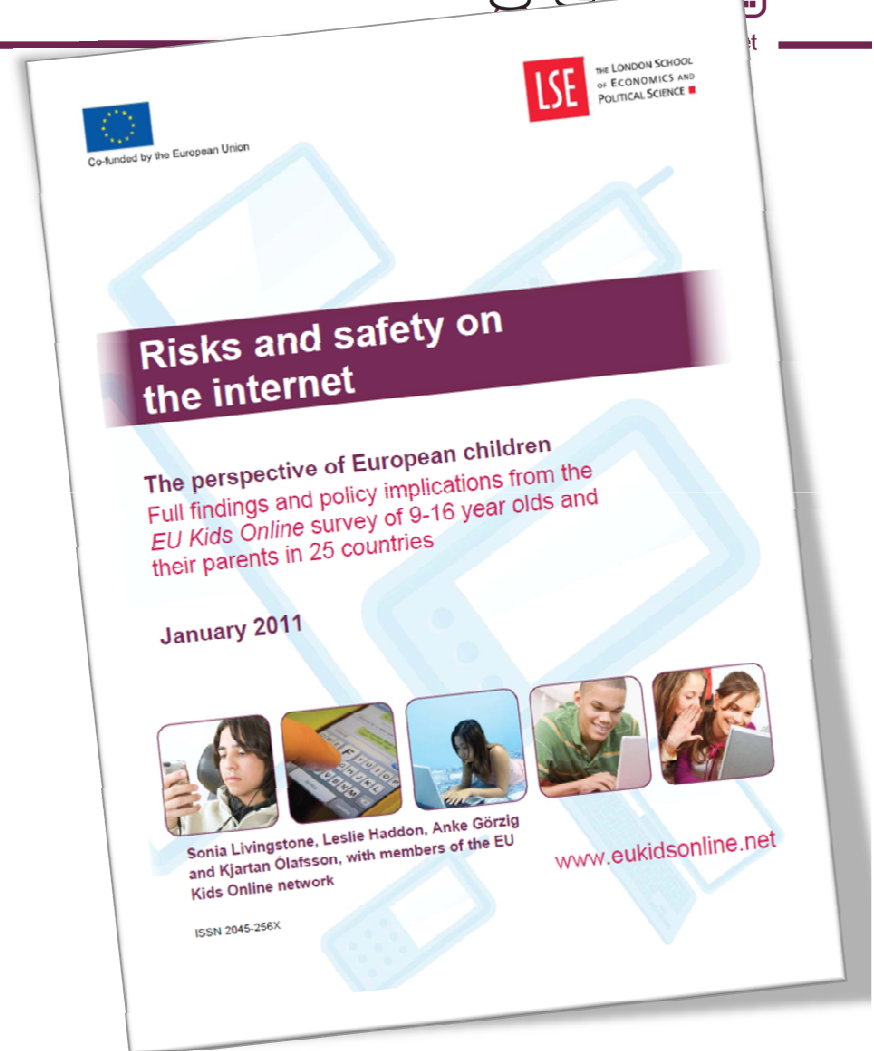
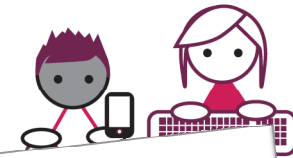
- Children, civil society - encourage children to be responsible for their online behaviour/ safety if possible, promoting empowerment and digital citizenship.
- Working to prevent children from engaging in online bullying behaviours might reduce their chance that they themselves will be bullied online by others
- Those involved in online bullying show overall a higher psychological vulnerability than those not involved in online bullying. In line with other research from EU Kids these findings suggest that those who can be seen as vulnerable in general (on- and offline) should be the target of future policy initiatives. This includes children who have psychological difficulties, are socially excluded (ostracised), engage in unhealthy sensation seeking behaviours or are in some way or another members of a vulnerable group.
- The absence of clear country differences in characteristics of those children who bully others online suggests that pathways across European countries to tackle cyberbullying could be similar – perhaps also global
- We are very worried about the many children seeking out suicide, hate and self-harm content (more analysis to come)

# References



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**Thank you ☺**  
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